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Lawyer Accused of 'Quiet Quitting' Files Lawsuit Against Napoli Shkolnik for Harassment, Bias



Heather Palmore says she never "quiet quit," but was instead locked out of the firm's system after complaining of discrimination and harassment.



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The lawyer accused of "quiet quitting" by Napoli Shkolnik filed her own discrimination lawsuit against the firm on Monday in Manhattan federal court.

In a 59-page complaint, Heather Palmore says she was only sued by the firm as retaliation for speaking out about "egregious" discrimination and harassment by senior management, which escalated after she retained counsel.

In one instance, a teddy bear with a noose around its neck was strung up in the sightline of her office, the lawsuit says. The law firm says the bear was the mascot of a pharmaceutical company it was suing.

"Ms. Palmore has had the courage to speak out against discrimination at the Firm and has been made to suffer for it, with the Napoli Preemptive Lawsuit filed against her being just the latest in an ongoing string of retaliatory acts," the complaint reads. "Despite being lawyers bound to act with ethics and integrity, they are nothing more than boorish bullies who will stop at nothing and break the law to intimidate people who try to stand up to them."

Palmore, who joined the firm as chief trial counsel in 2021, says she has been subjected to "horrific, hostile and blatantly unlawful" treatment since she first raised claims in mid-to-late 2022.

In the latest development, she was fired via email Sunday evening without citing any legitimate cause, per her attorney David Gottlieb of Wigdor Law.

“Napoli Shkolnik embodies the lowest level of the legal profession—run by partners who lack any level of integrity and will stop at nothing to use the courts to exact revenge, engage in intimidation and bully those who stand up to them,” Gottlieb said in a statement. “The firm’s treatment of Ms. Palmore and others is completely deplorable, and the firm must be held fully accountable in all regards.”

Palmore’s lawsuit says she first intended to file claims against Napoli Shkolnik in December, but paused in favor of negotiation and mediation. During the first session, Palmore says the firm offered her hundreds of thousands of dollars and asked her to stay on.

“But the whole process was a ruse intended to buy the Firm time to fabricate its own bogus lawsuit to file before Ms. Palmore could file her lawsuit—and gain some ill-conceived strategic advantage by filing first,” the court papers state.

Napoli Shkolnik sued Palmore in Nassau County Supreme Court on Friday. But their lawsuit is replete with “countless bald-faced lies,” she claims.

One of those lies is that she “quiet quit” her job, the court papers say. Instead, she says she “lost” access to the firm’s network one day after Napoli Shkolnik received a letter from an attorney and learned she’d retained counsel.

“It is devoid of logic to assert that Ms. Palmore could take advantage of a remote work system that she did not have access to,” the complaint says. She, therefore, reported to work daily, in-person, at the firm’s Melville office.

And while the firm claimed she’d worked almost no hours in 2023, she says that was part of the mediation agreement that she only work from home starting January 12th—which she was unable to do given her lack of access to the system.

Palmore also says she never worked for two firms at the same time, as the firm claimed in its own lawsuit against Palmore. The lawsuit alleges the only basis for that fiction is that her social media account includes a reference to “Palmore Law Group P.C.,” which she operated briefly prior to joining the firm.

Palmore experienced discrimination from the moment she met partner Paul Napoli, according to the complaint. During that meeting, Napoli allegedly commented that he “had never met an African-American trial attorney before” and that she “look[s] amazing for her age.” Later at a firm event, Napoli reportedly introduced her to a group of people as the “black female Ben Crump.”

Within her first month at the firm, she says there were issues. She brought in matters, but no one at the firm did intake or even followed up, which left her fielding complaints from prospective clients. Palmore says her agreement with the firm never involved her shouldering a huge caseload, with her job instead being predominantly marketing and outreach.

When she received her first case—which another lawyer at the firm openly called “shitty”—she allegedly found no one had done proper due diligence and the client had been ignored.

Palmore repeatedly attempted to engage staff at the firm regarding outreach and with potential new case ideas, but was rebuffed, completely ignored, or had her ideas stolen and given to another white male associate while she remained copied on email transmissions, the lawsuit states.

When she raised her concerns of workplace discrimination, she said she received a call from a screaming Napoli, saying “it is his Firm and he can run it however he wants” and ending the call by claiming she was “ruining [his] dinner plans.”

In October 2022, she said she was told for the first time of unsatisfactory work, and that the firm would be reducing her salary to an unspecified amount. During the same meeting, she was also chastised for “taking an aggressive tone,” the complaint says.

After she retained counsel, a number of changes occurred, the lawsuit alleges: her title on the website changed from “Chief Trial Counsel” to Of Counsel/Chief Trial Counsel,” she was removed from email lists, not invited to office get-togethers and holiday parties, and even given the wrong start-times for meetings.

Less than a week after hiring her own lawyer, Paul and Maria Napoli showed up unannounced at the Melville office, the papers say.

That same day, the complaint says a “riddle” appeared on the whiteboard in the office kitchen: “what is something no one wants, but no one wants to lose?”

Underneath, someone had written the word “lawsuit” amidst other guesses, which was circled and marked with a check.

Despite the alleged discrimination and lack of support, Palmore’s lawsuit says she’s still brought in a case value of between \$12 million and \$20 million.

“Today’s filing continues Ms. Palmore’s pattern of false statements in her efforts to shakedown the firm for money,” said Offit Kurman attorney Lucas Markowitz, who represents Napoli Shkolnik. “It is precisely these types of outlandish falsehoods that undermine real claims of discrimination and hurt the true victims of unlawful employer conduct. Ms. Palmore is happy to sacrifice these victims to pad her own pockets.”

Markowitz said the hanging bear was the mascot “Anda the Panda” of pharmaceutical company Anda Pharmaceuticals against whom the firm was trying a case for half of 2021.

“Of course, since Ms. Palmore knew what Anda the Panda was, she never complained until recently when it became clear she was about to be terminated for poor performance, nearly 13 months after the pharmaceutical mascot decorated the office,” Markowitz added. “The firm looks forward to proving its affirmative claims, defending against this case, and exposing Ms. Palmore’s lies in Court.”

Palmore is suing for discrimination and harassment, retaliation, interference, violation of New York Anti-SLAPP Law, and other actions.

She is seeking a jury trial, various damages, an injunction barring defendants from engaging in such conduct, and a declaratory judgment that the defendants violated U.S. and New York Laws.

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